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**DeNUCCI SAYS DPH BIOTERRORISM PROGRAM
NEEDS STRONGER ACCOUNTABILITY**

State Auditor Joe DeNucci reported today that the Department of Public Health (DPH), responsible for management and accountability of the Commonwealth's bioterrorism funds, was unable to locate one of its regional Mass Casualty Incident trailers during an audit site visit.

DeNucci said this called into question the usefulness of the trailers in the event of a terrorist attack or other emergency. The 10 MCI trailers located in five regions across the state are intended to serve as centers for deploying emergency medical services in an event involving large numbers of casualties.

DeNucci's audit examined approximately \$28 million in homeland security grants awarded to Massachusetts by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to enable the public health community to prepare for and respond to a terrorist attack or any other public health emergencies. DPH entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with contractors for the purpose of developing a mutual aid plan for upgrading and deploying Emergency Medical Service units in response to a terrorism incident and infectious disease outbreak.

However, DeNucci's audit found:

- Not all municipalities within each region had been notified of trailer availability, location and purpose.
- Periodic maintenance of the trailers and equipment did not take place to ensure the trailers were in a constant state of readiness.
- Trailer storage locations were not as stated in the signed MOA.
- Periodic drills and/or exercises involving the use of the trailers and equipment did not take place.
- A biannual fiscal report on expenditures of funds had not been provided.

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- A Standard Operating Procedure had not been developed.

As part of the audit, DeNucci's staff conducted a site survey of two Mass Casualty Incident trailers at a regional location. In one instance, the trailer was not at the location specified in the Memorandum of Agreement, nor was it at the secondary location. The only personnel with keys to the trailer who might have known the location were unavailable.

At a second MCI unit visited, the trailer's contents had not been unpacked and sorted, nor had any of its equipment been tested. Also, medical supplies and equipment were susceptible to weather and climate conditions. It did not appear the trailer was in a state of readiness as required in the MOA.

In response to DeNucci's audit, the Department of Public Health said it has implemented corrective measures. According to DPH, the regions have established websites and other communications tools to provide awareness of the availability, location and purpose of the MCI trailers. The regions are also filing fiscal reports with DPH and conducting drills and exercises in at least one of their assigned trailers. Also, a full-time DPH employee has been assigned responsibility for dealing with the five regional EMS Councils to ensure that all aspects of the Memorandum of Agreement are being achieved.

"Without proper oversight, the Department of Public Health cannot provide assurance that the Commonwealth would respond effectively to a bioterrorism emergency," said DeNucci. "I am encouraged by the corrective action that DPH has taken, and I hope the department will continue to closely monitor its efforts to protect the public's health and safety."

DeNucci's report is the latest in a series of audits of the Commonwealth's homeland security efforts since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.